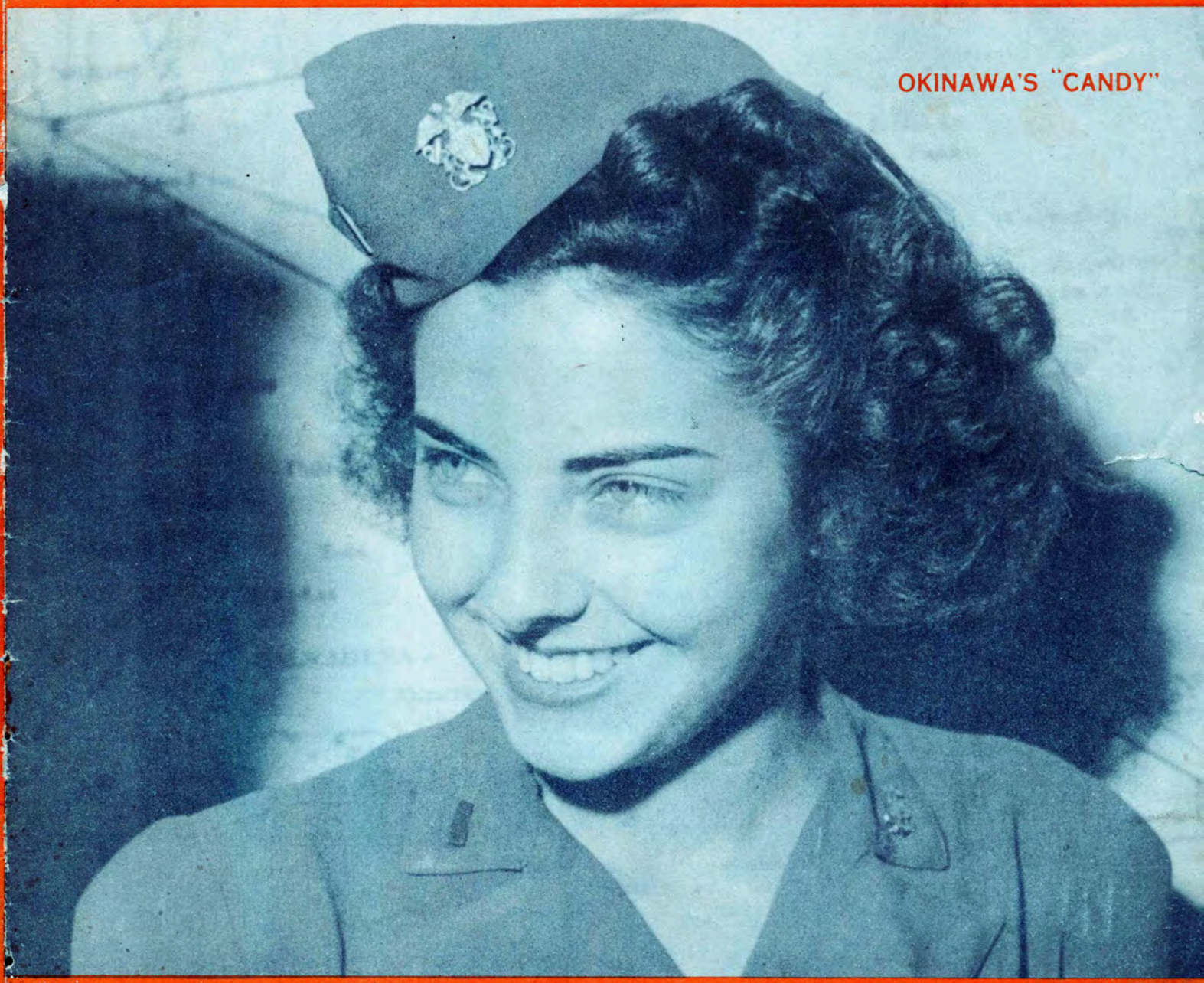
NATS PACKET



OKINAWA'S "CANDY"

NAVAL AIR TRANSPORT SERVICE COMMAND, PACIFIC WING

MAY 1945

THIS MONTH

A FULL STORY...

. . . with pix on how we print NATS Packet was requested during the month by the Bureau of Naval Personnel. We welcomed the official excuse to get our editorial self mugged a few times, but the story may be of more general interest to you. Here it is, in brief:

Material from all NATSPac squadrons is received through public relations officers or correspondents, with a lot of leg-work coverage done at headquarters by the Packet staff. Ideas for art come from all directions.

Make-up of the Packet is also done by the staff. The copy is set on an ingenious gadget called a "Vari-Typer," which automatically makes the left and right margins even. That sounds simple enough, but actually it takes a lot of planning to fit each story into the right place.

Every effort is made to avoid breaking a word or using punctuation at the end of any but the last line of a paragraph. The reason for this is that the Vari-Typer, for all its formidable appearance, is still a typewriter, and a period or a comma takes as much room as an 'm' does.

After the copy is set, it's pasted on a cardboard form, with black paper covering the space allotted to pix. The form and full-size pix pasted on separate cardboard go down below to the Air Navigation Office lithographic room for photographing, the pix being stripped in after reduction and half-toning.

("Half-toning" is the process of re-photographing the pix through a screen, making reproduction possible by means of thousands of minute dots.)

From the finished negative a zinc plate is made which goes to the lithographic press room to turn out finished pages "four up." The pages are taken to Honolulu to be cut and assembled, then stitched and trimmed---quite an undertaking with thousands of copies involved. Then comes delivery. Each unit's quota is wrapped separately and sent via board mail for the quickest possible distribution.

And there's your NATS Packet!

But don't let this "Packet staff" stuff fool you. There are three of us---full time, that is. After going through the above routine, then what?

We just have a cup of jo and start on next month's issue.

TWO NATSMEN...

. . . who stowed away on the Mars from Honolulu to Alameda were last month found "guilty of conduct to the prejudice of good order and discipline."

Their sentence: confinement for 12 months, reduction in rate to apprentice seaman, and---after confinement---a Bad-Conduct Discharge from the Navy.

WHEN WE...

. . . looked down at our ankle to see what had pinched us so fiercely, it was impossible to believe---but there stood an apprentice seaman all of two inches high. "I," blurted the Lilliputian intruder, "am Nat."

Nat's tiny belly was round, and on his skivvy shirt was the NATS anchor insigne. His arms looked like pilot's wings.

"I have decided to join NATS Packet," declared Nat. "It looks like a good life, working around here."

Startled that such an undersized imp could have gotten into the Navy, we asked what job he could do.

"Hell! Don't worry about me," Nat swaggered. "I'll keep busy. I can write stories, peddle your magazine and, under pressure, even sweep up---and I'm pretty good at just sitting around and bitching!"

So Nat is sticking around. He'll turn up now and again, and whenever he does, frankly, we'll be just as surprised as you.

NATS PACKET

MAGAZINE OF THE NAVAL AIR TRANSPORT SERVICE COMMAND, PACIFIC WING.
VOL. I MAY, 1945 NO. 8

Published monthly for NATSPac personnel with approval of the Secretary of the Navy.

Editorial Office: NATSPac Public Relations Unit, Naval Air Station, Honolulu, T. H.

Material in NATS Packet has been cleared by the Pacific Wing Chief Censor, and the magazine may be sent to the Mainland.

Lithography: Air Navigation Office, Naval Air Station, Honolulu, T. H.

A copy of NATS Packet is lithographed for each officer and enlisted man of NATS-Pacific, and distributed through squadron public relations officers.

Actual weight: two ounces. Postage (including half-ounce manila envelope): 9¢ first class, 30¢ airmail.

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Okinawa's 435,000 civilians pose a major policing and supply problem. As a U. S. Marine issues Navy hobnails to these Japanese subjects, they show poverty, fright and suspicion.

OKINAWA

NATS LANDS FIRST AIR TRANSPORT, REMOVES FIRST WOUNDED ON L-plus-6

A NATSPac Skymaster landed at a captured Okinawa air strip on L-plus-six, first American transport plane to follow the new invasion. It hauled in the first mail and cargo and enough fuel to evacuate 20 wounded men to Guam. During its hour on the ground, Marine fighters patrolled the skies to keep off enemy planes.

Flight nurse on the first plane, and first American woman on Okinawa was VRE-1's comely Ensign Jane (Candy) Kendeigh, pictured on the cover. She was the first sky angel in at Iwo Jima, too, and admits that during both invasions fighting men took time out to whistle at her.

VRE-1, the Pacific Wing's evacuation squadron, is now running a regular service between Guam and Okinawa.

Comdr. Jack W. Thornburg, skipper of the Pacific Wing's new Air Evacuation Squadron One, flew the first transport into Okinawa six days after the invasion.

NATS Sky Nurses

WORD flashed from Oakland to Okinawa: NATS has nurses! These are the girls all the fellows along the "main highway" will be seeing and talking with. Think of sunny smiles and pretty shanks at a place like Johnston or Kwajalein or Guam! Knowing telephone numbers wouldn't help---but knowing the number of the right R5D of VRE-1's fleet might.

Over a hundred flight nurses joined NATS in the transfer that made VRE-1 the eighth squadron of NATS-Pacific. Theirs is the rugged job of tending the wounded as they fly Stateside and then deadheading west to do the same thing again.

VRE-1's Skymasters are specially fitted to handle the wounded direct from fighting fronts. Each nurse is assisted in flight by a hospital corpsman in giving blood, pain-killing drugs and other treatment. To add to the patients' comfort, top priority on flight levels is given to evacuation planes.

NATSmen's reactions to this new development was summed up---but conservatively---by a report to NATS Packet from Johnston Island:

"Navy nurses recently visited us. Morale surged upward---for we know they'll be coming back!"

UP THE SKYMASTER LADDER (bottom to top) come Ensign Mildred Teass, Lts.(jg) Eileen Magill and Helen Mak, Ensign Virginia Smith and Lieut. Mary Grimes. As flight nurses of VRE-1, they will be seen flying up and down NATS' battlefront-to-homefront highway. *ABOVE:* Usually too busy to get up forward, Lts.(jg) Helen Mak (left) and Norberta Joyce steal a minute to inspect an R5D's *office*. *RIGHT:* In green nylon jumpers, their working outfit, Ensign Viola Meining (foreground) and Lieut. Thelma Reiling adjust litter straps on a VRE-1 Skymaster.

YOU MAY BE GOOD, BUT--

YOU'VE GOT TO PROVE IT TO SKIPPER A SKYMASTER

SKIPPERS of VR-11's Skymasters have flown their giant landplanes over the world's biggest ocean a total of 17 million miles---and their safety record is 4.0.*

That's a record which impresses even the wise men of aviation. At the outset of any attempt to explain it, a spokesman for VR-11 would refer to the maintenance work of VR-4 and VR-10, the ground service rendered along the line by VR-12, and to the training facilities provided by VR-3.

But any talk about how the Skymaster Squadron does its impressive job would quickly get around to the plane commanders themselves. They are the officers ultimately responsible for getting R5Ds from Point A to Point B, always with acres of salt water below. They regularly make the longest scheduled over-water hop in the western hemisphere (Oakland-Honolulu, 2100 nautical miles).

It's no accident that they are good. On top of his regular Navy pilot training, each Skymaster command-pilot candidate is subjected to another full training course. After his commissioning as a Naval Aviator, the typical candidate goes to NAS, Atlanta, for 25 hours of instrument instruction in twin-engined Beechcrafts. Then he reports to the VR-11 Second Pilots' Ground School in Honolulu for three weeks of aerology, recognition, navigation, survival, communications and courses concerning R5D characteristics.

This knowledge tucked away, the candidate starts "on the line." He flies as second pilot for a period of time depending on his ability and the number of second pilots ahead of him. Then he advances to first pilot.

Each month the top 30 first pilots are sent to VR-3's training school at Olathe, Kansas. There the candidate progresses from R4D co-pilot to commander, putting in 200 hours on the left side. Next he reports to the VR-11 Transition Training Detachment at Oakland and (near Modesto, Calif.) at Crow's Landing.

(The VR-11 plane-commander candidate might by-pass the Olathe phase of the training program if he comes from R4D service with VR-13. After the required 200 hours as R4D plane commander, he would be eligible for assignment direct to the Oakland-Crow's Landing detachment.)

At Oakland he gets another three-week course, and flies

"That shark's mouth is where the nose wheel fits," the instructor tells aspirant R5D commanders. At the VR-11 Oakland-Crow's Landing Training Detachment, they get final schooling before becoming Skymaster Skippers.

* This means no fatalities or serious injuries to passengers or crew. Actually, three planes of VR-11 have been washed out, two of them recently: an R5D in March at Guam, when a main landing gear failed; another at Okinawa in April, when a soft spot in the runway was hit on landing.

Candidates for R5D skipperhood, in one of many ground-school classes, learn slid[illegible]e technique of load balancing.

[illegible]function of cowl flaps is explained to R5D students, who have previously had at least 200 hours as R4D commanders.

an R5D for at least 20 hours. Following that he goes back on the regular VR-11 roster and gets 75 hours of further route familiarization as first pilot, ending his training with two check rides as acting skipper under a veteran pilot.

Then---and only then---if he has gotten thumbs up all along the rocky road to skipperhood, does the VR-11 pilot become a full-fledged command pilot.

A long way back, when his wings were bright and shiny, the aspirant R5D pilot may have thought there was nothing to it. But the officer who is finally pronounced a Skymaster Skipper, and is given one to fly across the Pacific, knows that there is more than meets the eye. You've got to be good---and you've got to prove it to a lot of tough people.

VR-11 Skymaster crews have never had to use the life raft in 17 million miles of flying, but they learn how just in case.

HERM the CRAB

". . . We are also seeking a suitable replacement for Herm, the Unit's pet hermit crab, who thoughtlessly disappeared a week ago, after learning the intricacies of NATSPac manifesting procedure." ---Extract from semi-monthly newsletter from Officer-in-Charge, Roi.

THE tragicomic story behind this plaintive report started one day on the beach at Roi-Namur. A shell such as he had never seen before caught the eye of the NATS officer. It was indeed a rare one, most delicate in design, shape and coloring. But it was occupied. Yes, it was the home of one of those independent creatures known as a hermit crab.

This crab wanted his home, and so it was that he became the office mascot of NATS Unit Roi. But he had an even more responsible role in store. The OinC sometimes had to do some work himself, and he had high hopes of teaching Herm---which the crab was christened---to answer the phone, man the counter, and make himself useful in tne OinC's absence. So Herm set to work and made a great hit with passengers and crew alike.

But the life of a specialist (V) cramped Herm's style. He thought fondly of his native haunts among the monkey faces and lapping waves, the Shell-Oil signs and the ever-searching SeaBees. He missed the charming female hermit crabs. Gradually, a scheme for escape evolved in his cagey, crustacean mind.

Herm would hide in the "out" basket on the OinC's desk, and be carried to freedom by the unsuspecting guard-mail yeoman. Hide he did---but he waited for hours that stretched into days. The "out" basket was completely ignored. So Herm changed his strategy. Stealthily he crept into the box marked "outgoing board mail" and lay still, as though nothing were up. This time he would escape his grim quonset prison near the dusty air strip. He laughed inwardly as he thought of the OinC having to work again.

But Herm had miscalculated a second time. Nobody even looked inside the box. As transports came and went, Herm grew more and more desperate. He even thought of putting in for flight orderly.

And then the supreme inspiration came. Why hadn't it occurred to him before? He climbed to the edge of the board-mail bin, tumbled to the deck and simply walked out. And so you see, as Herm said to his friend the turtle after returning to his beloved seashore, "You never get anywhere without you stick out your neck."

---SAM J. HENRY

BATTLE OF BLOODY NOSE RIDGE

Eight enlisted men at NATS Unit Peleliu went out on an adventure toot recently and found plenty of souvenirs---but not the kind they could bring home.

Taking advantage of an unusually dry day, the little band, headed by J. W. Myers, AEM2c, and F. Maratta, AMM3c, started out to explore Peleliu's rocky hills and retreats.

Armed with carbines and .45s, they looked more like an Okinawa vanguard than a party of NATSmen on liberty. But the weapons were more for effect than protection---live Japs being the last thing they expected (or hoped) to find.

Not even when they approached Bloody Nose Ridge was there any uneasiness. The Marines had cleaned out the island; there was nothing---really nothing at all---to worry about.

After hours of fruitless searching, they spotted a cave. A few Jap bodies lay near the entrance, all of them badly decomposed. To all appearances, the cave was deserted. Nothing ventured, nothing gained, they thought, so in they went. Surely there would be some souvenirs here.

As they cautiously rounded a bend in the passage, their flashlights picked up, first, a Marine shelter-half, then an ammunition box---and then the bare feet of a dead Jap. Huddled together, they pressed nearer until the entire body of the Jap was in sight. As the light hit his face, the DEAD Jap opened his eyes . . .

Moments dragged by. Finally Myers found his speech and ordered the Jap to come out. When he didn't move, Myers released the safety on his .45, aimed and pulled the trigger. Nothing happened. He tried again and again without success---and then the NATSmen got the hell out themselves. Examining his weapon, Myers found that he had been pressing the clip release instead of the safety!

While some of the party stood guard, the Marines were summoned. An attempt was made to lure the Japs out through an interpreter. Receiving no response, the Leathernecks simply dynamited the cave's several entrances and sealed in the Japs.

The cave on Bloody Nose Ridge, Peleliu, where NATSmen (above) found both dead and live Japs. Even when Marines were called, the Japs wouldn't surrender, so cave was dynamited.

This is the first planeload of wounded evacuated from Okinawa, on L-plus-six. The flight nurse is Ensign "Candy" Kendeigh, pictured on the cover. Note tag on man at right.

AT OKINAWA NATS WAS 'FUSTEST WITH MOSTEST'

"NATS-Pacific offered more air evacuation service out of Okinawa than the fighting forces have had to use," said Captain D. W. Tomlinson, ComNATSPac, back from a personal inspection of Okinawa last month. The new VRE-1 service was capable of ten trips a day out of the Ryukyus, yet in late April only four a day were being called for.

"We are proud that NATS-Pacific was ready to back up the invasion with more than enough service," the Captain told NATS Packet. A Skymaster flown by Comdr. Jack W. Thornburg [see page one] was the first to land after the invasion, on L-plus-six, and first out with wounded. Captain Tomlinson took an R5D in on L-plus-ten, arriving ten minutes after a Jap attack on Yontan Field.

VR-12's NATS Unit Okinawa, headed by Lt. (jg) George S. Gaillard, is turning our evacuation planes around in 55 minutes, while Marine fighter planes afford protection above. Between arrivals, the NATSmen have been spending considerable time ducking Jap and our own shells.

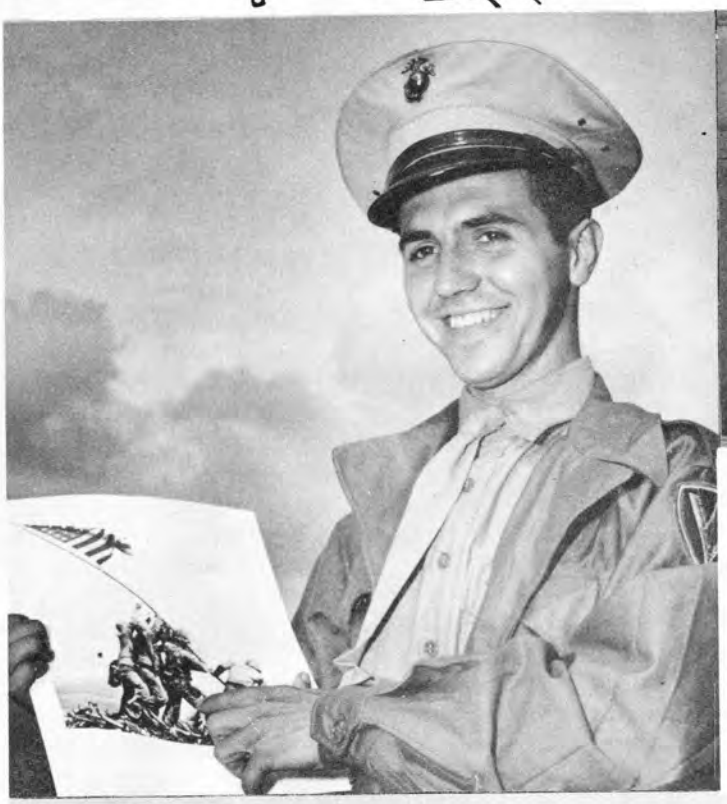
During the first days of flights into Okinawa, getting fuel was difficult, if not impossible. Many R5Ds left Guam with enough gasoline for the 3000-(statute)-mile round trip. But the Army, anxious for mail, arranged to supply up to 500 gallons per plane, so that, in exchange, each plane could bring in an additional 3000 pounds of letters for the troops.

New records are being set by NATS-Pacific in the removal of wounded men from battlefront to rear-area hospitals. At Okinawa, soldiers and Marines have been aboard our R5Ds en route to Guam within an hour of being hit.

Temporarily VR-11 crews and planes have been used in the evacuation service, until such time as VRE-1 has its own personnel and equipment ready to assume the full load of the work. All planes in this service have been fitted out specially to accommodate both stretcher and ambulatory cases.

Nat's ALBUM

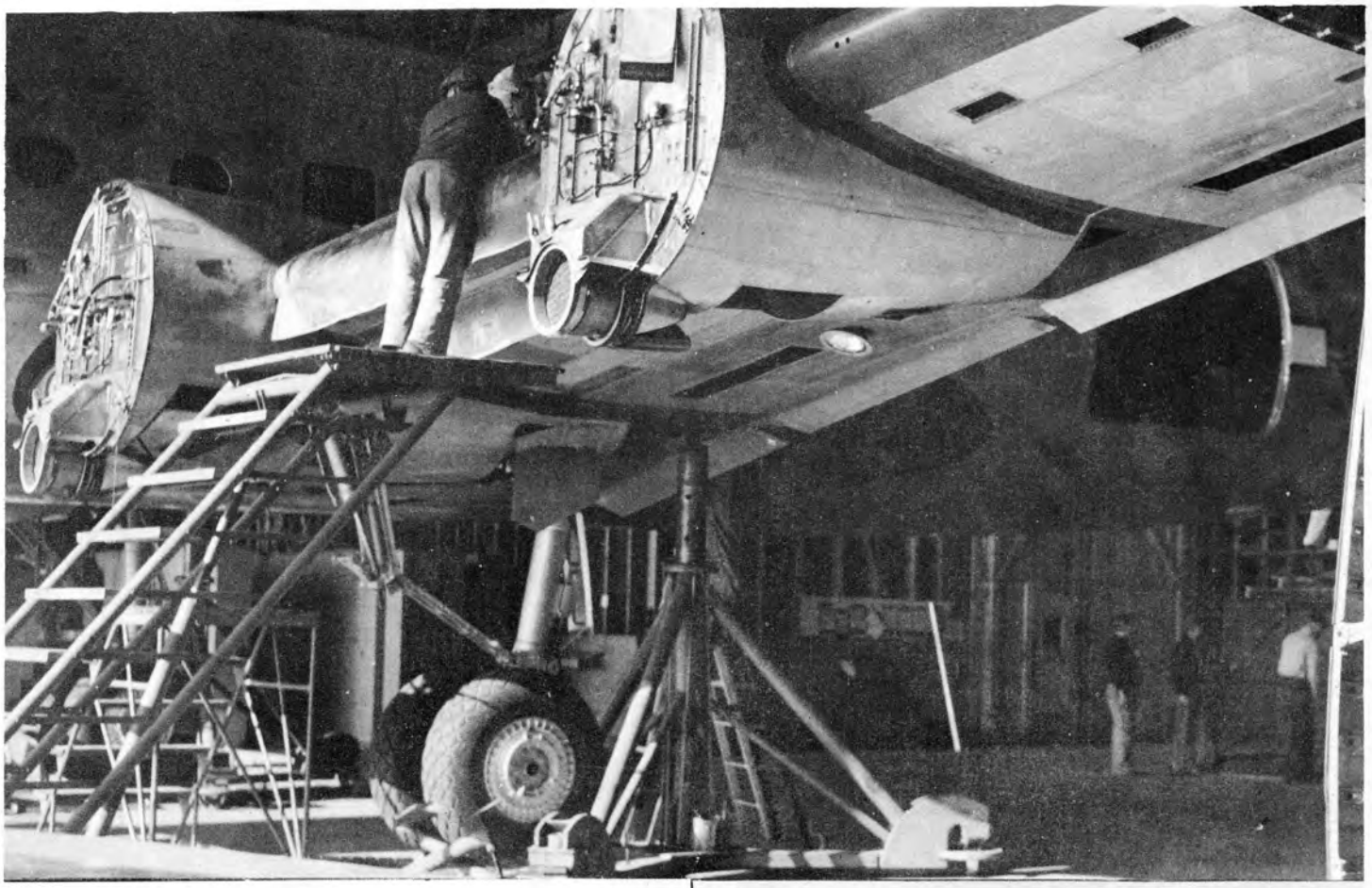
SQUADRON PHOTOS OF THE MONTH



AT THE LEFT---Pfc. Rene A. Gagnon of Iwo Jima fame modestly points to himself in the flag-raising picture taken on Mount Suribachi. The 20-year-old Marine, who recently returned to the mainland via NATS (this shot was taken in Honolulu) was somewhat bewildered at all the fuss made over him. Of his five buddies in the famous picture, four have since been killed. The fifth, a Navy medical corpsman, has lost a leg.

ABOVE---Joe Rosenthal, AP photographer who took the Iwo Jima picture, is shown at the NATS Alameda terminal as he signs an autograph for Lieut. Paul Wilvert, VR-2 plane commander.

BELOW---*NATSPACKET* is the name of this 45-foot picket boat in Honolulu which, under a NATS crew, began operating during April to take NATSmen on fishing excursions around Hawaii.



ABOVE---An R5D undergoing major progressive overhaul at NAAS, Oakland. The work is done by the Air Transport Division of Matson Navigation Co., under contract to the Navy.

AT THE RIGHT---Admiral William F. Halsey pins the Air Medal on Alvin F. Pierce, ARM2c, VR-11 radioman, who distinguished himself last November as rear-seat gunner of a carrier-based bomber. Presentation took place in April at NAS, Honolulu.

BELOW---George Randel, AOM1c of the VR-13 armory, examines handmade shotguns used by valiant Filipino guerrilla forces against the Japanese occupation army. Of crude materials, yet cleverly and sturdily made, these prized curios transform common water pipe, nails and bed springs into weapons reliable at close range. They fire 12- and 16-gauge shells.

TROPICAL LOVELINESS: A Samoan seated in a stream, washing bananas.

SOME LOOK BACK WITH FONDEST MEMORIES

"AS we take off from the familiar lagoon for the last time, there's a lump in our throat and a warm place in our heart for the desolate waste of our South Pacific atoll."

"Those sleepless SoPac nights will break all but the very strong quickly. That's when you learn to hate the place with a vicious passion. That rock is *purgatory* in thin disguise."

---Each is the view of a NATSman in the South Pacific, recorded in his mementos. Together, they suggest the difference of attitudes among many of our personnel as they said farewell last month to Palmyra, Canton, Funafuti, Espiritu Santo and Noumea, ending for them a 4200-mile route which was critical to winning the war in 1942 and 1943. With the fighting now far to the west and north, our men and equipment were moved out of this withered branch of the giant NATS-Pacific tree of supply.

OPINIONS CHANGE

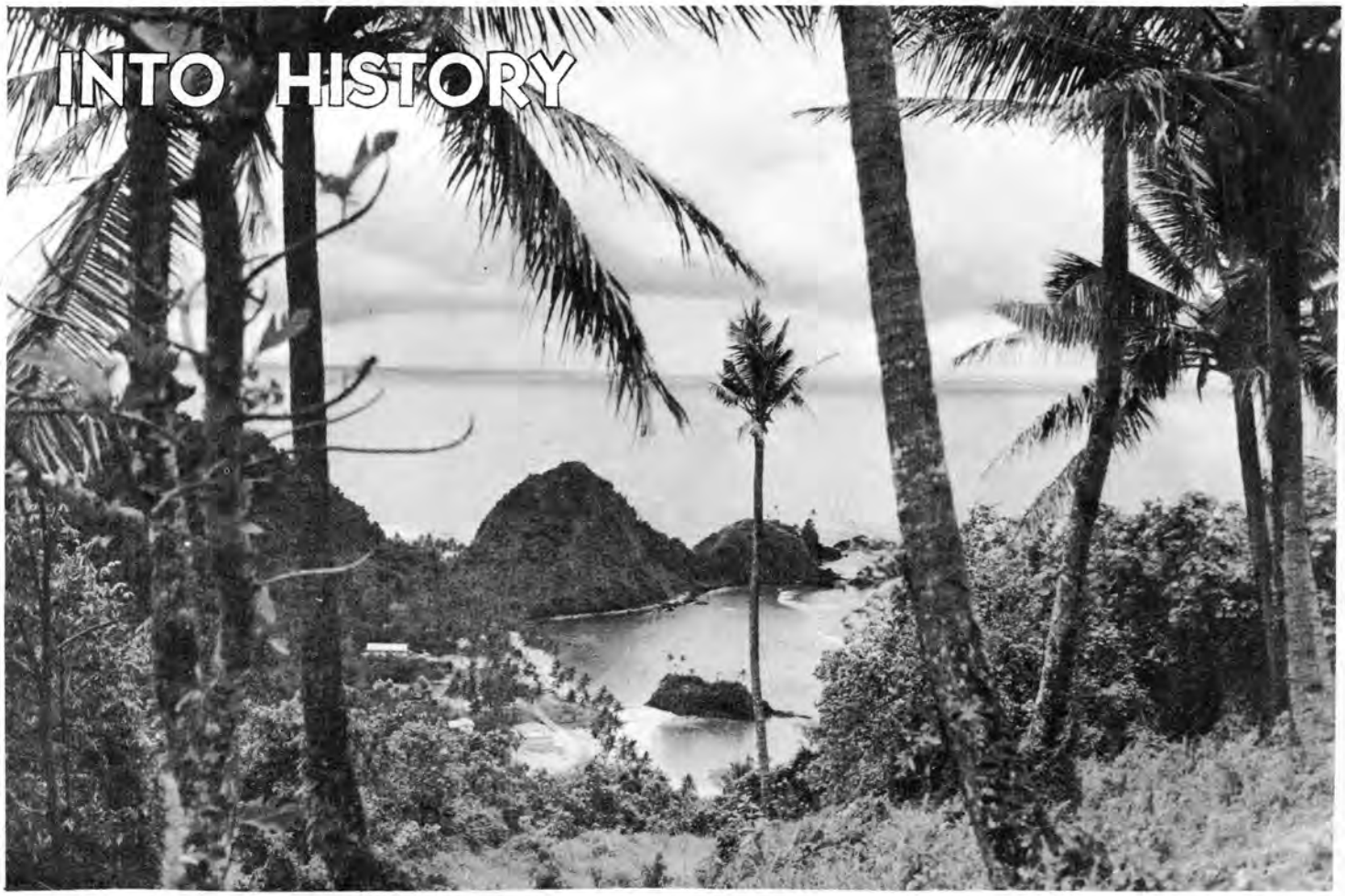
NATSmen's opinions of the fabled South Sea isles had changed quite a bit as the war progressed. During the first months of 1942 the hot, foul breath of the Jap was on everyone's neck. *"Remember Pearl Harbor"*---and to hell with petty things like dysentery or the soul-piercing heat or rats chewing on your toenails.

The Jap was stopped. He was turned back. He was routed. A new calm came to the atolls. NATSmen had time to learn more of---and from---their island neighbors.

TROPICAL CONTENTMENT

Lieut. A. G. Paul, last NATS OinC at Canton, reported: "We looked forward to our trips to neighboring islands such as Sydney, Hull, Atafu and Nukunono. . . . The natives spent weeks making fans, floor mats, model canoes, necklaces and other trinkets to give their American guests. The carefree lives of these natives who still cling to the primitive ways of their ancestors and live peacefully without the restrictions of our modern civilization are indeed the envy of most of the visitors. . . . So there lies Canton, uninhabited once more with nothing but the sea and the Frigate birds to keep a vigil. . . . She will always live in our hearts."

The natives of Funafuti made the NATSmen's parting memorable. "We were invited to a wedding feast and *siva-siva* (dance and song feast)," said Lt. Comdr. C. C. Barber, OinC. "Native *pow-pows* (outrigger canoes) took the crowd ashore. . . . We were showered with gifts. . .baskets and mats and shell necklaces. . . . Evening prayers were



SCENIC GRANDEUR: A picturesque village on NATS' South Seas shuttle.

OTHERS FLINCH WHEN THEY THINK ABOUT IT

held, then the feast. . . . Each man squatted between two pretty girls with whom he shared his basket of food. It included raw and cooked fish, breadfruit, white bread, bread cooked in deep fat, bread made of coconut milk and rice, coconut milk and coffee. Those who could stand the smell of rancid coconut hair oil and not-too-clean fingers sharing their food ate a hearty meal. After the meal, hosts and guests exchanged speeches and songs. The feast ended [and] the real siva-siva began, with two native groups contesting as to loudness, endurance and hip-swaying ability."

TROPICAL DELUSIONS

Lt. (jg) E. E. Smith, for five months OinC of VR-12's NATS Unit Funafuti, looks back less fondly on his SoPac internment. He arrived, he said, with a sparkling vision of tropic nights and rustling grass skirts.

Instead: "The sweat comes freely; your shirt clings to your skin like poorly hung wallpaper. . . . The chow hall features powdered milk, dehydrated potatoes, spam and heavy bread. Water has tea in it to kill the chemical flavor. . . . Heat and lack of appetite remove all excess flesh, and that's when you begin to notice the ants which crawl in your nose and mouth and ears as you try to sleep. . . . So you go to the movie, out under a starry sky. Minutes later comes the inevitable tropical deluge and you're drenched . . .

"Or, try writing home. You won't have much trouble ---once you've learned to shadow-box an assortment of crawling and flying bugs with one hand while writing with the other. But your envelopes, of course, are sealed shut, by tropical humidity. Just slit an end open and seal it with staples. . . . In your bunk, naked and sweating, under heavy mosquito netting, you hear the rats scurrying about. At first you don't notice them, but later they become the object of your intense hatred. And, mate, when you get around to conducting a personal feud with a rat, it's time you moved on . . ."

"The lure of the South Sea Isles" is a phrase that never again will have the same meaning for SoPac NATSmen. To some it will suggest the horrors of hell itself. To others it will mean the romance of balmy nights, cool swimming in crystal waters, and a quiet refuge from the frantic struggle for existence in the *civilization* of modern American cities. As NATS SoPac slipped into men's memories, many murmured a sentimental "Aloha" and many sighed: "Thank God!"

Letters head Stateside from Samar

Ruined Protestant Church in Manila.

Philippine legislature building.

Filipinos resume normal lives.

CLOSER!

NATS HELPS REBUILD PHILIPPINES

Robert M. Garrick, VR-12 Y1c, formerly of the Los Angeles Times, *recently made a 12,245-mile round trip to the Philippines in nine days. He was a member of the official inspection party headed by Comdrs. C. F. Luethi and J. E. Harlin, and consequently saw a great deal in a short time. What Garrick saw, and his reactions, are summarized on this and the following page. The photographs were taken by J.B. Strack, VR-12 PhoM1c, who also accompanied the party.*

I'M a fellow who likes to flip a switch and have my room flooded with light. A complete turkey dinner and a hot shower fall in line when I think about "living." I'm the kind of a guy who likes to dive into bed, throw a pillow under my head and find sleep amid a billowy fluff. Maybe you feel the same ... but when you fly into the Philippines, brother ... forget it.

We took off from NAS Honolulu at 0510 one dark morning. ETD actually was 0500, but the MAA and I had a misunderstanding, which made my awakening an entirely self-motivated event. Motivation, however, set in late. Half-dressed, a gear-stuffed 'chute bag in one hand, a typewriter in the other, I reported for duty.

JOHNSTON & KWAJALEIN

They say we touched Johnston and Kwajalein. Photographer's Mate John Strack, who came along to cover the pictorial end of the trip, later showed me pictures of both places, so I guess we did.

High-balling across the Pacific, we raced the sun and time. Old Sol won, so we hit Guam in pitch darkness. A parking jeep flashed a brilliant "Follow Me" at us, and our silver Skymaster was put to bed for the night. NATS at Guam has become a routine and efficiently operated organization. Our stay here lasted long enough for us to fall into a quonset, grab a few hours' sleep, and shoot a couple of pictures. Then we took to the air again, Samar in the Philippines our destination.

NATS Unit Samar is a fabulous place of fabulous people. Lieut. James Cordon, then OinC, is a regular "Trader Horn" character. His fame stems from the fact that he has opened more new bases to NATS planes than any other person in the Command.

Lieut. Cordon and a tropic rain greeted us. We had hardly gotten five steps from our Skymaster when we were soaked. No one seems to mind the rain. Johnny North, CSpV, remarked, "Don't worry, the sun will

Bomb-pocked runway at Nichols Field is repaired by Filipinos who until recently were working for Japs.

Crudeness of the operations tow[er] and shack at this northern Luzon field attests to the recency of its capture.

dry you out in a little while."

Samar is my idea of a well-functioning advanced base. Several thousand feet of runway have been hacked out of a coconut palm grove to provide adequate landing and take-off space for almost every type of aircraft. NATS R4Ds and R5Ds share the field with a bombing group, fighter squadrons and a couple of transport and utility air units. Everyone works. A skivvy shirt will pay a native to help load or unload a plane when time is short.

Life is routine, yet the officers and men love it. You choke on the dust, soak in the rain, and haul out of the sack at all hours of the night. Schedules are met and few find time for griping.

MINDORO

From some place we commandeered an R4D, squeezed our take-off between those of an outbound bomber strike and returning fighters, and headed for Mindoro, and our final objective.

At McGuire Field, Mindoro, an airfield named in honor of the late Army ace who was just behind Major Bong with 38 enemy planes to his credit, we touched for a 40-minute stay. Here NATS maintains one of its smallest bases. One officer and an enlisted man represent VR-13 at this arid field. The inspection was a matter of minutes and then we were taking off for Nichols Field, two miles outside of blasted Manila.

Skirting Jap-held islands, we sighted Manila and pointed the Skytrain's bow for Nichols Field. Someone said, "Look at all the sunken ships in the harbor." I turned a green face to the port and proceeded to act in a fashion that ended a five-year boast of never having been airsick.

NATS Manila personnel consisted of Lt. (jg) J. E. Burress and four enlisted men---Aviation Machinist's Mates E. J. O'Connor, E. M. O'Toole, W. R. Barningham, and Carpenter's Mate J. W. Cooper. Also in the "unofficial complement" was a 13-year-old Filipino lad called "Joe" and a mongrel, "Dutchess."

NATS Manila was in an unstable condition. This lay in the fact that the tent which served for operations, headquarters and housing was set quite near the airstrip. Every time a plane warmed up, the slip stream tore across the field and "laid low" NATS Manila.

Two trips daily were being handled at Nichols, while spare time was devoted to getting some semblance of a headquarters building into operation. Eating was still a problem. Boxed rations such as "K," "C" and "J" were the mainstays with an occasional hot meal when the Army played host.

As the gray shadows of evening crept over Nichols Field, I wandered over the area, absorbing the strangeness of a war-torn countryside. A figure outlined against the wreckage of a hangar attracted my attention.

"Hey, Joe," that inevitable shout caught up with me, and I turned to be confronted with a little brown fellow bearing a business-like rifle. I fumbled for a cigarette and offered him one. "Thank you, sir," he said humbly---and we were friends.

Mars---we won't use his last name---was a guerrilla, but not too good a one by his own admission. "I've killed only five Japs," he informed me, almost apologetically.

I returned to the plane and flopped on the hard deck, using some Mae Wests for a pillow. Mortar fire was visible in the distance---this was night in the Philippines---a tomb-like atmosphere in which the individual is insignificant.

MANILA

Of course we had to see Manila. Destruction of the "Pearl of the Orient" was unbelievable. People seemed to wander aimlessly through the torn city. Hunger was etched on the faces of many. Some were half naked. The battle had passed the once modern city and in its wake one found the fearful aftermath of total war. The brutality of the enemy was revealed by wrecked hospitals, shell-blasted homes and burned schools, none of which had a role in physical combat.

Each crate of supplies that a NATS plane unloads in these islands has a three-fold purpose: (1) It fortifies our positions in the Philippines. (2) It gives fighting material to those who will carry the battle north. (3) It is tangible evidence that our great United States takes care of its own.

Unglamorous is your job with NATS---maybe---but it's making heaven out of hell. I know---I was there.

...ROBERT M. GARRICK

Nautical but NATS

PACKET PUNCHES BY VR-11's LIEUT. JOE JAMES

"I'M WRITING A BOOK ABOUT YOU---ENTITLED 'GOD IS MY CO-PILOT LOUSY!'"

"IF THEY SAY IT'S GASOLINE, LET'S TAKE THEIR WORD FOR IT."

"NEVER MIND THE 'HELLO, MR. & MRS. AMERICA AND ALL THE SHIPS AT SEA'--- JUST SEND YOUR MESSAGE!"

"HMMM. . .LOOKS LIKE THIS ROOM IS OCCUPIED!"

"ER. . .I DON'T SEEM TO FIND A REGULATION THAT COVERS THIS SORT OF SITUATION . . ."

FRONT LINE

ABOVE-------- Personnel of NATS Unit Okinawa. Many arrived on L-plus-six with the evacuation squadron.

LEFT-------- Our air evacuation crews receive briefing on the Ryukyus area before leaving Guam.

LOWER LEFT--- At Okinawa, NATS Skymasters unload cargo, take on wounded, depart---all in 55 minutes.

BELOW-------- Yontan Field, Okinawa. During the first days, shells fell within fifty feet of this tent.

SEATTLE

There's a certain little bird who didn't get the word ...

One bitter cold night in Alaska, this little bird flitted about, looking for shelter. Under the nose of a giant VR-5 Skymaster, just landed, there was a cozy spot in the wheel well. There this Bohemian waxwing settled, and there he stayed until found by the line crew in Seattle 24 hours later.

Tamed either by nature or by fright, the stowaway made a splendid pet in the line shack---until the squadron feline, Mascot Myrtle, came along and started chewing on his tail feathers. Just in time, though, the bird hustled out of the window and headed north!

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HAWAII

Try telling a veteran Navy man that VR-11 has approximately 150 more officers than it has enlisted men! He may bet you money it's not true, and that's an easy way to pick up an extra two-bits. This unusual situation results, of course, from the fact that VR-11 is strictly an operating squadron. Most of its personnel are flying officers. The men of VR-4, VR-10 and VR-12 constitute the bulk of the force which keeps VR-11 in the air.

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MARSHALLS

Coast Guard Comdr. Jack Dempsey had seen quite a bit of our airline on his Pacific tour. Finally, at Kwajalein, he said, "NATS is the biggest thing I ever saw." A loading crewman piped up: "So are you, sir!"

BAY AREA

The Navy recently got a good laugh at the Army via Oceanic Air Traffic Control Center in the Federal Office Building. Out of a clear sky and without prior inquiry, the following dispatch came in from an ATC-guarded B-29, Honolulu-bound: "No trouble. Just lost." Hurriedly, the lost was found.

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CROW'S LANDING

Around the NATSPac circuit has been running one persistent question: what and where is Crow's Landing?

Crow's Landing is a Naval Auxiliary Air Station east of Oakland, near Modesto, California, where VR-11 now has a training detachment. It is an adjunct of the Skymaster training school at NAAS, Oakland. The training of plane-commander candidates there relieves Oakland airport of much local traffic.

The name of the new training base is still an enigma. No crows have been seen either landing or taking off there.

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SOLOMONS

Admirals and generals traveling NATS in and out of the Solomons have been greatly impressed by the courteous and efficient work of George G. Kenner, SpV2c, at the VR-12 unit there. Their praise of him was shared by his OinC, who recently arranged to have a commendation "for outstanding service" placed in his service record.

A Marine major summed up Kenner's most valuable characteristic: "He helps us smooth out the rough spots."

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BAY AREA

James J. Donnelley, CCS of VR-2, has just received the Army Distinguished Unit Badge, awarded to certain military and naval forces engaged in the defense of the Philippines between December 7, 1941, and April 9, 1942. Donnelley, who has been in the Navy 18 years, was a ship's cook first class aboard a U. S. submarine during the period for which he was awarded the badge. He has been attached to VR-2 since November, 1943.

ALASKA

On return trips from Point Barrow, NATS pilots are served lunches which often include sandwiches of reindeer or caribou steak. Another specialty being recommended at NATS' "top of the world" airport is the "penguin plate."

BAY AREA

Even C.O.'s get their laughs. Comdr. D. L. Mesker of VR-2 recently had his day lightened by a telegram from an enlisted man who was AWOL and who had been declared a straggler, requesting an extension on his AWOL.

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MIDWAY

Moving day came to Midway: "Under an air cover of gooney birds and screeching terns, the SeaBees trucked all our worldly goods to the new hut beside the NATS parking area. Our present location is so convenient that our only worry now is that our front windows may be broken by flying coral when planes turn to leave the area."

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SEATTLE

The first three Waves to serve as orderlies on planes of the Pacific Command recently began duty on the Seattle-San Diego run of VR-5. They are Susan Hansburn, SpV2c, Betty Marmont, SpV2c, and Rita Charlotte Marsden, SpV3c, each having been trained for her rating at VR-5 headquarters in Seattle.

NOTES

ALASKA

As spring slowly made its way along VR-5's Far North run, our correspondent this month wrote:

"Long accustomed to the awe-inspiring scenery of the Aleutians and the Alaskan coast, VR-5 flight personnel are now convinced there's nothing to compare with the grandeur of Anaktuvuk Pass, which stretches for 100 miles through the Brooks and Endicott Mountains north of Fairbanks.

"Vast herds of caribou also add interest to the arctic slope. It is not uncommon to see as many as 10,000 of the caribou in one herd. Recently the Search and Rescue Squad, headed by Lieut. E. G. Branham, spotted one caribou herd estimated at 50,000 head. Natives in the vicinity of Point Barrow are now engaged in spring hunts for polar bear, seal and walrus.

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HAWAII

"The experimental aluminum barracks has arrived and will be erected next week," announced NAS, Honolulu. Let's see, how many pots and pans . . . ?

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MARIANAS

"The G.I. 'calling card' has arrived at this unit," reports our correspondent. "Yes, the well-known chit has come into use. We have been issued chits for beer, chits for chow, and the way this base is progressing, we can expect to use chits to go see the chaplain. One handicap is that they are so cleverly designed that many NATSmen are planning on starving a few days and saving their chits for souvenirs."

BAY AREA

A VR-11 navigator, far the worse for wear, navigated home one night recently and crawled into his top bunk in BOQ. He kept right on snoozing even when he rolled out of his sack and lit on the deck. That's where the steward found him next morning. Shaking him, the steward asked, "Do you mind if I make up the top bunk, sir?" "Of course I do," came the befogged answer. "I'm IN the top bunk!"

PHILIPPINES

At Samar the same old trouble arose: finding someone willing to clean R5D heads during turn-arounds. Native employees took a very poor view of the assignment. But strategy and showmanship concocted by NATS Unit Samar personnel turned the dilemma into a success---even a triumph. A happy localite named Pedro was singled out and told he was to become an officer of the unit. He was to be Pedro, Captain of the Head. Not only that, but he he was to be hoisted up to the R5D hatchway in solitary splendor on a finger lift, which would stand by and then lower him and his buckets.

Pedro was pleased with this arrangement, and the NATSmen were ecstatic. Now, when an R5D comes along needing its chemical heads emptied, Pedro steps nimbly aboard his personal finger lift, utters the Philippine equivalent of "Gung Ho!" and soars up to his specialized job. And all his pals look on admiringly at the ceremony that is making quite famous Pedro, Captain of the Head.

SEATTLE

What athletes, these boys from the Frozen North! They finished second in the strong Puget Sound Basketball Service League, with 23 wins out of 31 starts. They climaxed their winter swimming season with a gala water carnival. And now, by golly, they're in the midst of the VR-5 intra-squadron softball season. We wish they'd take a rest once in a while---or at least take a long seventh-inning stretch.

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ALASKA

Seattle Sunday papers got to Point Barrow Sunday night, via VR-5 planes. "This may not be a record," exclaimed The Arctic Gusher, northernmost SeaBee paper, "but the SeaBees in the arctic will match the service they have received against that anywhere else in the world."

•◆•

BAY AREA

From NATSmen who are sweating it out a block off Market Street in the Oceanic Air Traffic Control Center comes a warning: "Back here setting-up exercises can be dropped; strong-arming one's way on and off street cars and commuters' trains provides ample constitutionals.

"A fat bank account is [also] recommended. San Francisco, according to the papers and your pocketbook, has the highest living costs of any city . . . Dispensary, ship's service and disbursing office are at Alameda, a half day's trip away . . . The waiting seat at the ration board will become familiar, that is, if the rotatee or his family eats, wears shoes or needs gasoline."

Who wants to go back *there?*

Natsketches

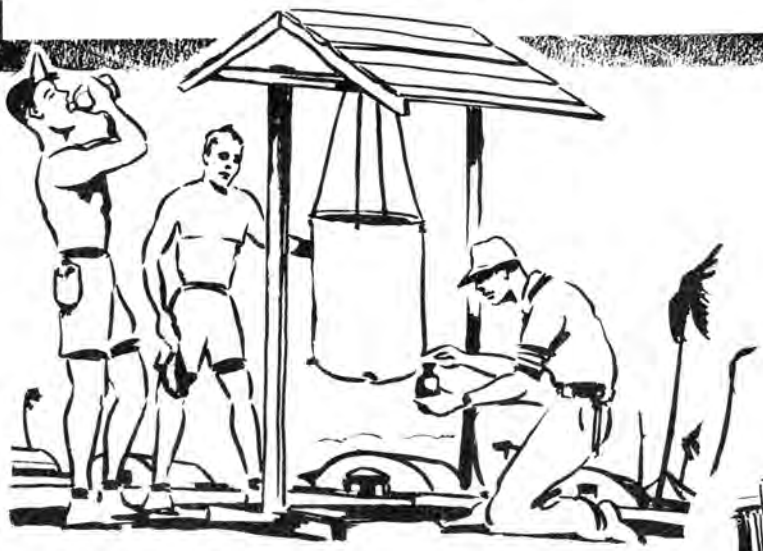
NATS Packet again presents random scenes in brush and ink, showing the work and play of men at NATS bases strung across the vast Pacific.

By ALFRED DUPONT

"THERE'S not much to write about from out here . . ."

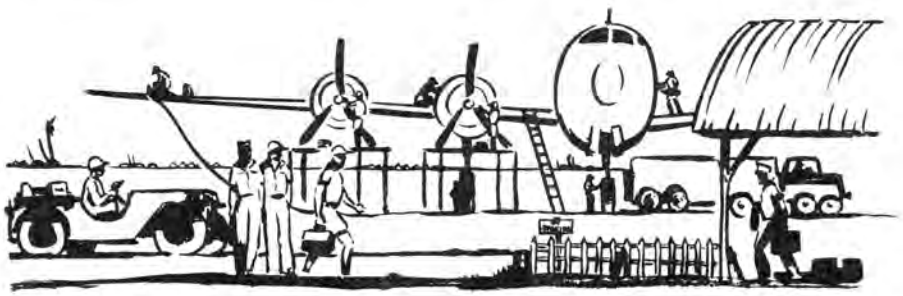
Thus, hundreds of NATSmen each week conclude their letters home. Yet an artist, observing the same men in their daily routines, sees drama all about them.

The unconsciously funny poses of "Rock-Happy Rogers" as they wait their turn in the beer line . . . the contrast of peace and havoc as a NATSman on liberty settles down against a once-lethal Jap pillbox, lights his pipe, and starts fishing . . . the ingenuity of Yanks with their windmill washing machines . . .



Lister bags---dubbed "cows" because of their teat-like spouts---supply pure water.

Underneath the broiling and energy-sapping sun, washing becomes less of a chore with this wind-driven washing machine to help out.

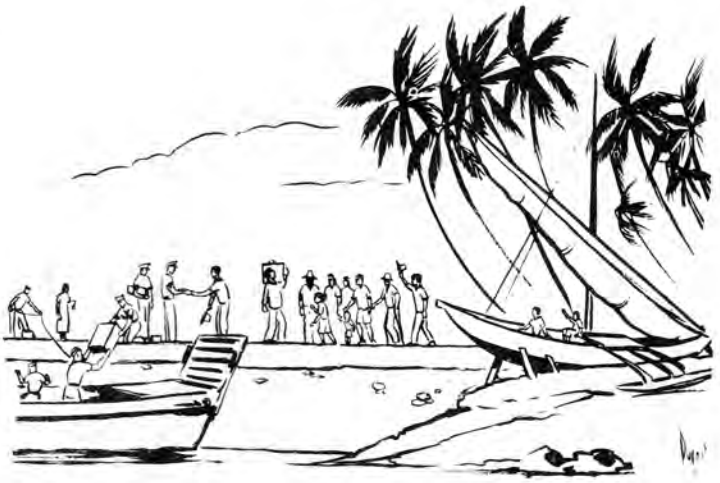


In front of the traffic hut, a Skymaster is fueled and checked.

Liberty-day fishing, in the shadow of a shattered Jap pillbox.

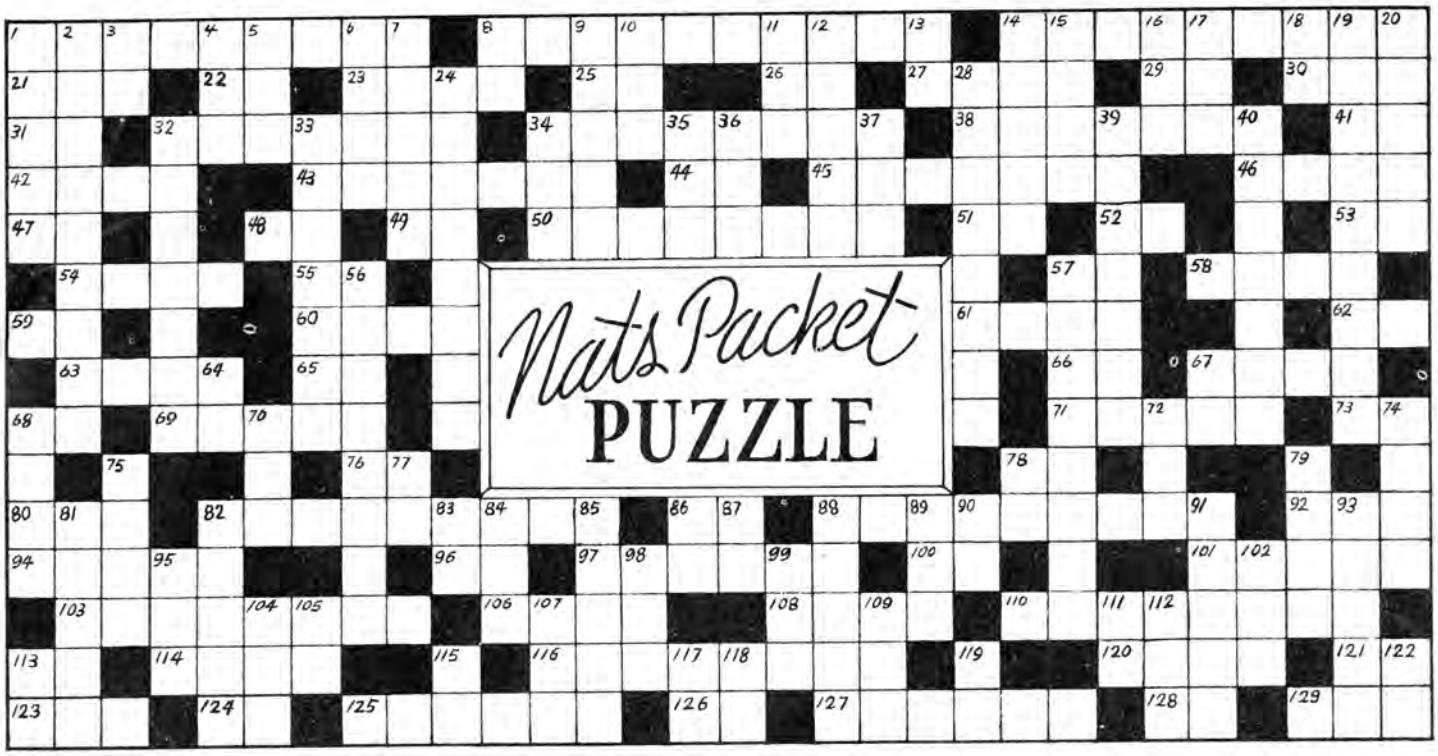
Hats are worn to fit the personality.

Anyone familiar with Kwajalein remembers these shell-riddled Jap fuel storage tanks. Today one is used as a ping-pong court, the other for storage.



Natives are amazed by the swift, mechanized methods of the U. S. Navy.

Next to mail from home, beer is most important to these "Rock-Happy Rogers."



(Answer will be found on page 20)

ACROSS

1-R4Ds.
8-VRE-1 was formed for this.
14-NATSPac has at least eight of these.
21-To be indebted.
22-Before noon.
23-To merit.
25-Degree.
26-Measure of land.
27-Islands lying southwest of the Philippines.
29-Thus.
30-Man-made landing strip.
31-Dad
32-To board a plane.
34-Radio message.
38-Not either.
41-Southern state (abbr.)
42-Greek hero.
43-Try.
44-Symbol for ruthenium.
45-An event of sorrow
46-Wicked.
47-Symbol for calcium.
48-Boatswain's mate.
49-From.
50-Innate qualities.
51-Enlisted aviation pilot.
52-Postscript.
53-Great Lakes (abbr.)
54-Garlands.
55-Expression of inquiry.
57-Exclamation.
58-Bear.
59-Direction (abbr.)
60-Time of day.
61-The office that determines who flies via NATS.
62-Preposition.
63-Article.
65-Torpedoman.
66-River in Italy.
67-Culmination.
68-Symbol for thoron.
69-Soupy.
71-To decree.
73-Steamship (abbr.)
76-The guy to beware of ashore.
78-At home.
80-Possessive pronoun.
82-Shows how high you are (too bad they don't attach one to each bottle of beer).
86-Plural ending.
88-Extraordinary.
92-Man's name.
94-Scheduled transport aircraft.
96-Accomplish.
97-Antenna.
100-Beast of burden.
101-Still hush-hush, this discovery has been a great boon to both aircraft and surface ships.
103-Places for complete overhaul of ships.
106-Custom.
108-Said of a ship under a stern commanding officer.
110-Outspoken.
113-Born.
114-Ages.
116-Control flaps.
120-Engrossed in emotion.
121-Whether.
123-Home of the free.
124-Symbol for rhenium.
125-Combine this with 94 across, and you will have the high-flying plane of the future.
126-Short for master-at-arms.
127-Instrument.
128-Type of destroyer new to World War II (abbr.)
129-This goes with a pan.

DOWN

1-Most of this area was vacated last month by NATS.
2-Important NATS stop in the Marshalls.
3-Old English pronoun.
4-To batter.
5-Colloquial abbreviation for unit of elec. intensity.
6-Shipshape.
7-Spanish for 'saint.'
8-Half an em.
9-Instigates.
10-Vehicle.
11-Sailor.
12-Angry.
13-East Canadian province (abbr.)
14-When you can dream of home.
15-A pound sterling or a chaw o' tobacky.
16-What's left of a cigarette.
17-The fictitious guy who signs all the questionnaires and checks just to show you how.
18-Ordnanceman.
19-A crew member does this with octant and plotting table.
20-'Keep her nose out of the blue' or you'll _____.
24-A kind of knot.
28-Clumsy.
32-Aroused.
33-Expresses sorrow.
34-To imitate.
35-Metal in the rough.
36-Rifle.
37-Married woman.
39-Tropical cyclone at sea.
40-What a landplane's wheels do after take-off.
56-How do you feel, brother?
57-Useful to a book but not to a human being.
64-Myself.
67-Kind of elec. current.
68-One definition is 'part of a plane.'
70-Nothing.
72-Girl's name.
74-She looks like a Wave.
75-If it weren't for that capital 'R', there would not be much NATS.
77-Later than 22 across.
78-That is (Latin abbr.)
79-French for 60 across.
81-Caused by the moon.
82-Burning enthusiasm.
83-Editor (abbr.)
84-Male cat.
85-. . .Soap operas, advertising, canned music ...
86-What you say when you're trying to think of the right word (and we don't mean cussing).
87-Spanish for 'yes.'
88-You'll never get this one: it's an African antelope.
89-For horizontal exercise.
90-Without.
91-Squawk like hell.
93-Fixed relation (and we don't mean your two-headed cousin back home.
95-To look at.
98-Slippery fish.
99-NATS transport officer.
102-Division of a play.
104-Single.
105-Civil Service (abbr.)
107-Grain.
109-Employ.
111-Parachute rigger.
112-Boy.
113-Greek letter.
115-Civil title.
117-Printer's measure.
118-Sun god.
119-3.1416.
122-Foot (abbr.)

Wingrins

We got an assortment of reactions to the first NATS Packet crossword puzzle in the April issue. Best we heard, though, was about the bashful Wave at VR-5, Seattle, who worked all the puzzle lines vertically so she wouldn't have to come across.

•◆•

TRIBUTE TO NAS, HONOLULU

Here lies the body of Seaman Shack,
Who suddenly died of a heart attack.
His laundry was promised on Tuesday,
And on Tuesday he got it back.

•◆•

Headline in the "NATS hedronews" of VR-9, Patuxent River:

NATS TO BE NAVY-IZED

We suspected they'd get caught up with when things slacked off in the Atlantic.

•◆•

ALAMEDA LAMENT

Ship's Service is a wondrous place,
Renowned in fame and glory,
But every time I visit there---
It's closed for inventory!

•◆•

"Winged Victory" was playing to a packed audience at NAS, Honolulu. along came a sequence where a B-24 washes out its gear in a rough landing on some Pacific atoll. The plane's skipper crawls out, looks over the sorry sight and asks Army mechs how soon it can be fixed. "Three hours, sir!" is the brisk reply.

"Hell," shouted a NATSman in the audience, "if that's as good as you can do, give it to VR-10!"

•◆•

A nudist is the only guy with less pocket space than a sailor.

•◆•

I'm all done with dames--
They cheat and they lie.
They prey on us males
Until we die.
They tease and torment us,
They drive us to sin . . .
Hey, look at the blonde
That's just come in.

•◆•

A seaman newly aboard at NATS Guam was piling it on thick about his previous sea duty, just as fellows new to NATS love to do.

"When we were shipwrecked in the South Seas for six months," he told his awed listeners, "I had only one companion---a beautiful blonde."

"My gosh, what did you do for food?" asked a Y3c.

"Damned if I remember."

•◆•

The Mighty Mars is big -- but did you know she's this big? A Lieut. Comdr. flying on her recently told Western Flying Magazine Correspondent Lynn Thomas, a fellow passenger, "Why this doggone thing weighs 17000 pounds more than the C-4 type submarine I was on in the first World War!"

•◆•

A report from NATS Manila recently received states: "Arrangements are now being completed whereby personnel will live aboard an aircraft tender anchored in the bay."

In spite of everything, NATSmen seem destined to get some salt on themselves before the war ends.

•◆•

PIN-UP FOR A GAG

IF you wouldn't like Betty Grable alongside when you hit the sack, weary with battle fatigue ---if you wouldn't, brother, then this ain't for you.

But if you would, NATS Packet will withdraw from its vaults a luscious and original pin-up photo---such as you ogled on the back cover--- and send this dish of dynamite to you personally.

The catch is this: in return you gotta send us an un-canned yarn or gag chosen for publication on this page.

Mail it to:

Editor, NATS Packet, VR-12, Box 49
Fleet Post Office, San Francisco, California

But, sir, Lieut. Tasso insists that he be transferred to another run---the native men won't let him land anymore.

MAINTENANCE SUGGESTIONS PAY OFF

Swapping their ideas for money in the VR-10 Suggestion Award Program, F. F. Christensen, ACMMH (above, left), and Charles Henthorn, AEM3c, took first and second prizes in March. Christensen, of the Hydraulic Shop, won a $25 War Bond for his suggestion on how to improve the R5D brake-testing unit. Henthorn, of the Prop Shop, received $5 in War Stamps for his development of an alternator checking device for ground-testing Curtiss electric propellers.

VR-4 TRANSITION

VR-4, now in the second month of its second year, has undergone one of the greatest transitions of any NATSPac squadron. Once it operated R4Ds from Alaska to Corpus Christi; today it is exclusively a maintenance squadron performing vital work of planes of VR-3, VR-5 and VR-11.

Day and night NAAS Oakland, home of VR-4, roars with seven daily transcontinental flights of VR-3, six daily stops by VR-5's Seattle-San Diego flights, and as many as seven daily VR-11 transpacific flights. Flagships, too, come by frequently for maintenance checks.

Plans to triple output of R5D overhauls at Oakland suggest the strategic importance of VR-4, which probably will have to double its personnel and enlarge all facilities proportionately. Comdr. K. B. Haugen, the skipper, has surveyed VR-4's job ahead and told his officers and men to prepare for big things to come.

LIFE WAS NEVER DULL AT JIM CORDON'S OUTPOST

Lieut. James T. Cordon, advanced-base ATO extraordinary, has logged as much time in foxholes as some pilots have in the cockpit. As officer-in-charge of the first VR-12 NATS units in the Marshalls, the Marianas and the Philippines, he has been bombed, strafed, shelled and shot at.

Lieut. Cordon

Last month Cordon returned to the peace of a West Coast billet, after more than a year of rushing around the Pacific. From NAAS Oakland, he can look back on quite a record.

He and a handful of enlisted men were aboard the NATS R5D that flew into Saipan on D-day plus ten. They remained to establish the VR-12 NATS unit. Thereafter, Japs attacked sporadically to recapture the field. As planes took off, snipers lurked at the far end of the runways. Coral fragments tossed up by Jap bombs showered Cordon's tent.

But it was on Leyte that Cordon & Company had their closest call. Raiding Japs planted a stick of anti-personnel bombs on their doorstep. Shrapnel from one wounded an officer and four enlisted men. Cordon was unhurt.

His life was never dull. This is a fairly typical extract from his official diary, telling the story of his transfer to his last outpost:

"So it's off to Samar we go. We're much like Ringling Brothers---tearing down our tents and decking, packing gear, and departing ten minutes after our last flight out of Tacloban. Arrived at Samar 30 minutes later. Our two jeeps, parrots, and monkey as well as our native house boy 'Tony' were shipped by barge. . . . The first of the month we had a high-octane gasoline tank explode about 400 yards from our quarters. The Army extinguished the blaze within 24 hours."

Oakland must seem dreary routine to Jim Cordon. However, there's a *Mrs.* Cordon to take up all his spare time.

HONOLULU FISHING PARTIES

"NATSPACKET," 45-foot picket boat operated by a NATS crew, is now available at NAS, Honolulu, for the use of NATS personnel who crave ocean fishing.

Parties of six to ten officers or men may, by making reservations at the ComNATSPac staff information desk, obtain the craft for half- or all-day cruises. Chief Boatswain's Mate Clyde R. Harris is skipper of the NATS-PACKET. The crew includes two V-for-Victory twins, Vurl M. Vore and Virgil M. Vore, both S1c.

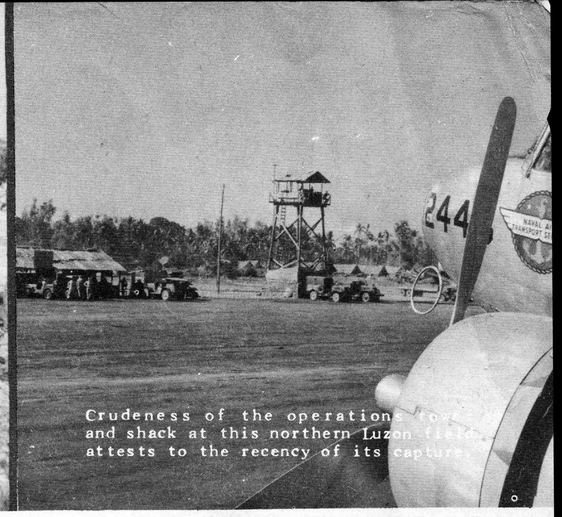
THE LATE ERNIE PYLE— opposite page.

His greatness lay in a simple theme---the lives and thoughts of America's fighting men. He was their voice, their champion, and for their cause he died.

CHILI WILLIAMS

Letters head Stateside from Samar

Bomb-pocked runway at Nichols Field is repaired by Filipinos who until recently were working for Japs.



Crudeness of the operations tower and shack at this northern Luzon field attests to the recency of its capture.

Ruined Protestant Church in Manila.

Philippine legislature building.

Filipinos resume normal lives.

CLOSER!

NATS HELPS REBUILD PHILIPPINES

Robert M. Garrick, VR-12 Y1c, formerly of the Los Angeles Times, *recently made a 12,245-mile round trip to the Philippines in nine days. He was a member of the official inspection party headed by Comdrs. C. F. Luethi and J. E. Harlin, and consequently saw a great deal in a short time. What Garrick saw, and his reactions, are summarized on this and the following page. The photographs were taken by J.B. Strack, VR-12 PhoM1c, who also accompanied the party.*

I'M a fellow who likes to flip a switch and have my room flooded with light. A complete turkey dinner and a hot shower fall in line when I think about "living." I'm the kind of a guy who likes to dive into bed, throw a pillow under my head and find sleep amid a billowy fluff. Maybe you feel the same ... but when you fly into the Philippines, brother ... forget it.

We took off from NAS Honolulu at 0510 one dark morning. ETD actually was 0500, but the MAA and I had a misunderstanding, which made my awakening an entirely self-motivated event. Motivation, however, set in late. Half-dressed, a gear-stuffed 'chute bag in one hand, a typewriter in the other, I reported for duty.

JOHNSTON & KWAJALEIN

They say we touched Johnston and Kwajalein. Photographer's Mate John Strack, who came along to cover the pictorial end of the trip, later showed me pictures of both places, so I guess we did.

High-balling across the Pacific, we raced the sun and time. Old Sol won, so we hit Guam in pitch darkness. A parking jeep flashed a brilliant "Follow Me" at us, and our silver Skymaster was put to bed for the night. NATS at Guam has become a routine and efficiently operated organization. Our stay here lasted long enough for us to fall into a quonset, grab a few hours' sleep, and shoot a couple of pictures. Then we took to the air again, Samar in the Philippines our destination.

NATS Unit Samar is a fabulous place of fabulous people. Lieut. James Cordon, then OinC, is a regular "Trader Horn" character. His fame stems from the fact that he has opened more new bases to NATS planes than any other person in the Command.

Lieut. Cordon and a tropic rain greeted us. We had hardly gotten five steps from our Skymaster when we were soaked. No one seems to mind the rain. Johnny North, CSpV, remarked, "Don't worry, the sun will dry you out in a little while."

Samar is my idea of a well-functioning advanced base. Several thousand feet of runway have been hacked out of a coconut palm grove to provide adequate landing and take-off space for almost every type of aircraft. NATS R4Ds and R5Ds share the field with a bombing group, fighter squadrons and a couple of transport and utility air units. Everyone works. A skivvy shirt will pay a native to help load or unload a plane when time is short.

Life is routine, yet the officers and men love it. You choke on the dust, soak in the rain, and haul out of the sack at all hours of the night. Schedules are met and few find time for griping.

MINDORO

From some place we commandeered an R4D, squeezed our take-off between those of an outbound bomber strike and returning fighters, and headed for Mindoro, and our final objective.

At McGuire Field, Mindoro, an airfield named in honor of the late Army ace who was just behind Major Bong with 38 enemy planes to his credit, we touched for a 40-minute stay. Here NATS maintains one of its smallest bases. One officer and an enlisted man represent VR-13 at this arid field. The inspection was a matter of minutes and then we were taking off for Nichols Field, two miles outside of blasted Manila.

Skirting Jap-held islands, we sighted Manila and pointed the Skytrain's bow for Nichols Field. Someone said, "Look at all the sunken ships in the harbor." I turned a green face to the port and proceeded to act in a fashion that ended a five-year boast of never having been airsick.

NATS Manila personnel consisted of Lt.(jg) J. E. Burress and four enlisted men---Aviation Machinist's Mates E. J. O'Connor, E. M. O'Toole, W. R. Barningham, and Carpenter's Mate J. W. Cooper. Also in the "unofficial complement" was a 13-year-old Filipino lad called "Joe" and a mongrel, "Dutchess."

NATS Manila was in an unstable condition. This lay in the fact that the tent which served for operations, headquarters and housing was set quite near the airstrip. Every time a plane warmed up, the slip stream tore across the field and "laid low" NATS Manila.

Two trips daily were being handled at Nichols, while spare time was devoted to getting some semblance of a headquarters building into operation. Eating was still a problem. Boxed rations such as "K," "C" and "J" were the mainstays with an occasional hot meal when the Army played host.

As the gray shadows of evening crept over Nichols Field, I wandered over the area, absorbing the strangeness of a war-torn countryside. A figure outlined against the wreckage of a hangar attracted my attention.

"Hey, Joe," that inevitable shout caught up with me, and I turned to be confronted with a little brown fellow bearing a business-like rifle. I fumbled for a cigarette and offered him one. "Thank you, sir," he said humbly---and we were friends.

Mars---we won't use his last name---was a guerrilla, but not too good a one by his own admission. "I've killed only five Japs," he informed me, almost apologetically.

I returned to the plane and flopped on the hard deck, using some Mae Wests for a pillow. Mortar fire was visible in the distance---this was night in the Philippines---a tomb-like atmosphere in which the individual is insignificant.

MANILA

Of course we had to see Manila. Destruction of the "Pearl of the Orient" was unbelievable. People seemed to wander aimlessly through the torn city. Hunger was etched on the faces of many. Some were half naked. The battle had passed the once modern city and in its wake one found the fearful aftermath of total war. The brutality of the enemy was revealed by wrecked hospitals, shell-blasted homes and burned schools, none of which had a role in physical combat.

Each crate of supplies that a NATS plane unloads in these islands has a three-fold purpose: (1) It fortifies our positions in the Philippines. (2) It gives fighting material to those who will carry the battle north. (3) It is tangible evidence that our great United States takes care of its own.

Unglamorous is your job with NATS---maybe---but it's making heaven out of hell. I know---I was there.

...ROBERT M. GARRICK